

AG11

COSHH essentials for farmers

This information will help employers, the self-employed and contractors comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice using RPE.

It covers the key points you need to follow to help reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Main points

- High dust levels can be produced in cleaning storage and housing sheds.
- Check safety data sheets for chemicals and consider substituting safer products.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet.
- Health surveillance is usually needed - see sheet G402.

Cleaning stores, sheds and silos

Control approach R

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

Hazard

- ✓ Dust is produced in cleaning grain sheds and animal houses. These can cause lung diseases such as asthma.
- ✓ Some chemical products can also cause asthma. Check the supplier's safety data sheet.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational asthma developing - this means short-term as well as long-term exposure.
- ✓ If an individual develops occupational asthma, avoid further exposure.

Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow access to trained people. Keep everyone else away.
- ✓ Consider safe access for working at height.

Equipment and procedures

- ✓ Remove as much dust as possible by mechanical means and vacuum cleaning.
- ✓ Avoid dry brushing and compressed air whenever possible.
- ✓ Provide personal protective equipment to minimise skin contact with chemicals.
- ✓ Follow instructions on product labels.
- ✓ Can you avoid products labelled 'may cause sensitisation by inhalation' or 'may cause sensitisation by skin contact'?



Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ RPE is normally needed. Ask your safety equipment supplier to help you get the right RPE.
- ✓ Select RPE that suits the wearer, the job and the work environment. Get advice from your safety equipment supplier.
- ✓ Depending on the products used, you may need a combination filter to cope with dust and vapour.
- ✓ You may need to provide air-fed breathing apparatus for work in confined spaces (eg closed silos, conveyor boots) or if using compressed air for cleaning.
- ✓ Powered or air-fed RPE is more comfortable to wear.
- ✓ Workers should put their RPE on before entering the area.
- ✓ Use RPE with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 20. See sheet R3. For air-fed breathing apparatus see sheet R5.

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- ✓ Disposable RPE, type FFP3, is acceptable for dusts. Don't use 'nuisance dust' masks.
 - ✓ Make sure that RPE fits properly - get advice from your supplier or read the instructions on the box.
 - ✓ Train workers to check their RPE works properly before use.
 - ✓ Replace RPE filters as recommended by the supplier. Throw away disposable RPE at the end of the day, or sooner if heavily soiled.
 - ✓ Keep RPE clean and store it away from dust.

Other protective equipment

- ✓ Provide overalls that do not retain dust eg smooth synthetic fabrics - not cotton or knitted.
- ✓ Provide protective gloves - single-use nitrile gloves are acceptable. If you must use latex gloves, use only 'low-protein, powder-free' gloves.
- ✓ Launder work clothing after each day's work.

Special care

- ✓ Consider immunising workers against tetanus.
- ✓ Contact with rat urine can lead to leptospirosis (Weil's disease). Cover cuts and broken skin. Carry the *Leptospirosis - are you at risk?* card. See 'Further information'.

Maintenance, examination and testing

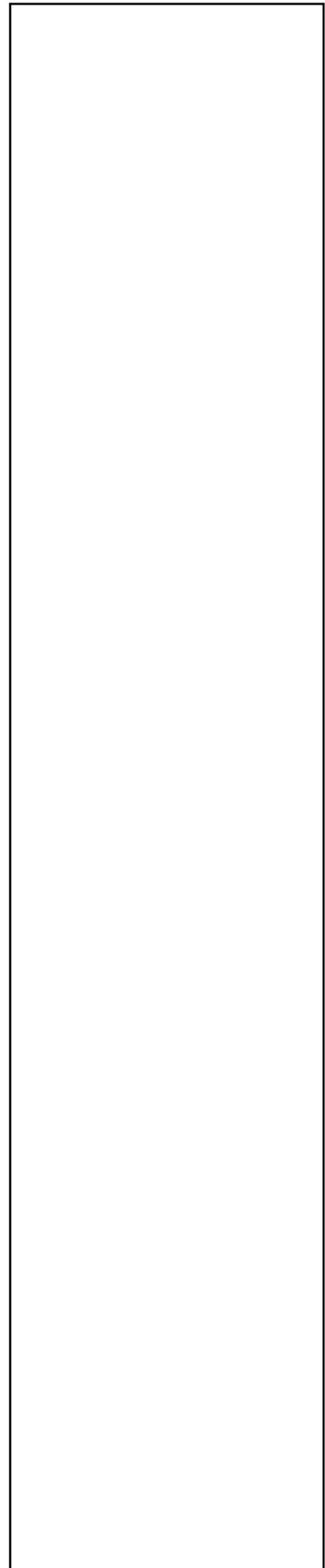
- ✓ It is vitally important to maintain RPE in effective and efficient working order.
- ✓ Examine and test non-disposable RPE thoroughly at least once every three months.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.

Health surveillance

- ✓ There is a chance of lung disease or asthma developing, even with good controls in place. Use health surveillance - see Sheet G402.
- ✓ Ask an occupational physician for advice - see 'Useful links'

Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell workers that dusts can cause lung diseases including asthma. Show them this sheet.
- ✓ Warn them about any hazardous chemicals.
- ✓ Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet AG0.
- ✓ Ensure that health surveillance is carried out on everyone that needs it.



Further information

- *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* HSG53 (Third edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 0 7176 2904 X
- *Preventing asthma at work. How to control respiratory sensitisers* L55 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0661 9
- *Leptospirosis: Are you at risk?* Pocket card INDG84 HSE Books 1990 (single copy free or priced packs of 20 ISBN 0 7176 2546 X) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg84.htm
- *Common zoonoses in agriculture* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS2(rev2) HSE Books 2000
- See www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm for other advice on health and safety risks in agriculture.

Useful links

- For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.
- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at www.bohs.org for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see www.nhsplus.nhs.uk.

This document is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/ and www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/

This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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Employee checklist

- Is your RPE working properly?
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage.
- If you find any problems, get them fixed. Don't just carry on working.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.
- Throw away any single-use gloves every time you take them off. Throw away other gloves at the end of the job.